

# MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND EMPLOYMENT IN ARGENTINA: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES

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## Background

Several studies evidence that more than half of Multiple Sclerosis (MS) patients lose their jobs. Loss of employment during highly productive ages is associated with significant detrimental consequences to health and quality of life.

Cognitive and clinical symptoms can have significant negative effects on employment status. The identification of these factors will allow mitigating unemployment and improve quality of life of MS patients.

The Buffalo Vocational Monitoring Survey (BVMS) is a tool to characterize work-challenged patients and identify patients for intervention. It is a necessary tool to investigate the difficulties of employment in Argentina.

## Objectives

- To examine the relationship between employment status (no employment, part-time employment, and full-time employment) and clinical and cognitive variables.
- To analyze the relationship between work hours and clinical and cognitive variables.

## Methods

Table 1. Demographic and clinical data	
	Multiple Sclerosis n 83
Mean Age (years)	39.51 ± 10.00
Mean Education (years)	14,20 ± 2.92
Gender	Female: 59%
Mean disease course (years)	10.03 ± 7.23
EDSS	2.56 ± 1.90
Depression	13.34 ± 10.56
Fatigue	4.13 ± 1.76
<b>Clinical Forms:</b>	
Relapsing-remitting	95.2%
Secondary progressive	1.2%
Primary progressive	3.6%

## Outcomes measures

### Cognitive outcomes:

• BICAMS comprises the Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT), the California Verbal Learning Test – Second Edition (CVLT II)

• Brief Visuospatial Memory Test – Revised (BVMTR); 7/24 Visuospatial Scale, PASAT 2"-3" and Verbal fluency.

Clinical variables: EDSS; Beck's Depression Inventory II, & Fatigue Scale

Employment: Argentina adaptation of the Buffalo Vocational Monitoring Survey

Of all the variables studied, two factors were obtained: Clinical factor (EDSS, fatigue and depression) with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.400 and cognitive factor (SDMT, CVLT, BVMTR) with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.765.

### Inclusion criteria's

Patients with confirmed diagnosis of MS as defined by McDonald's criteria (relapse-remission (RRMS), and secondarily progressive (PMSS) and primary progressive (PPMS)

≥ 18 years old.

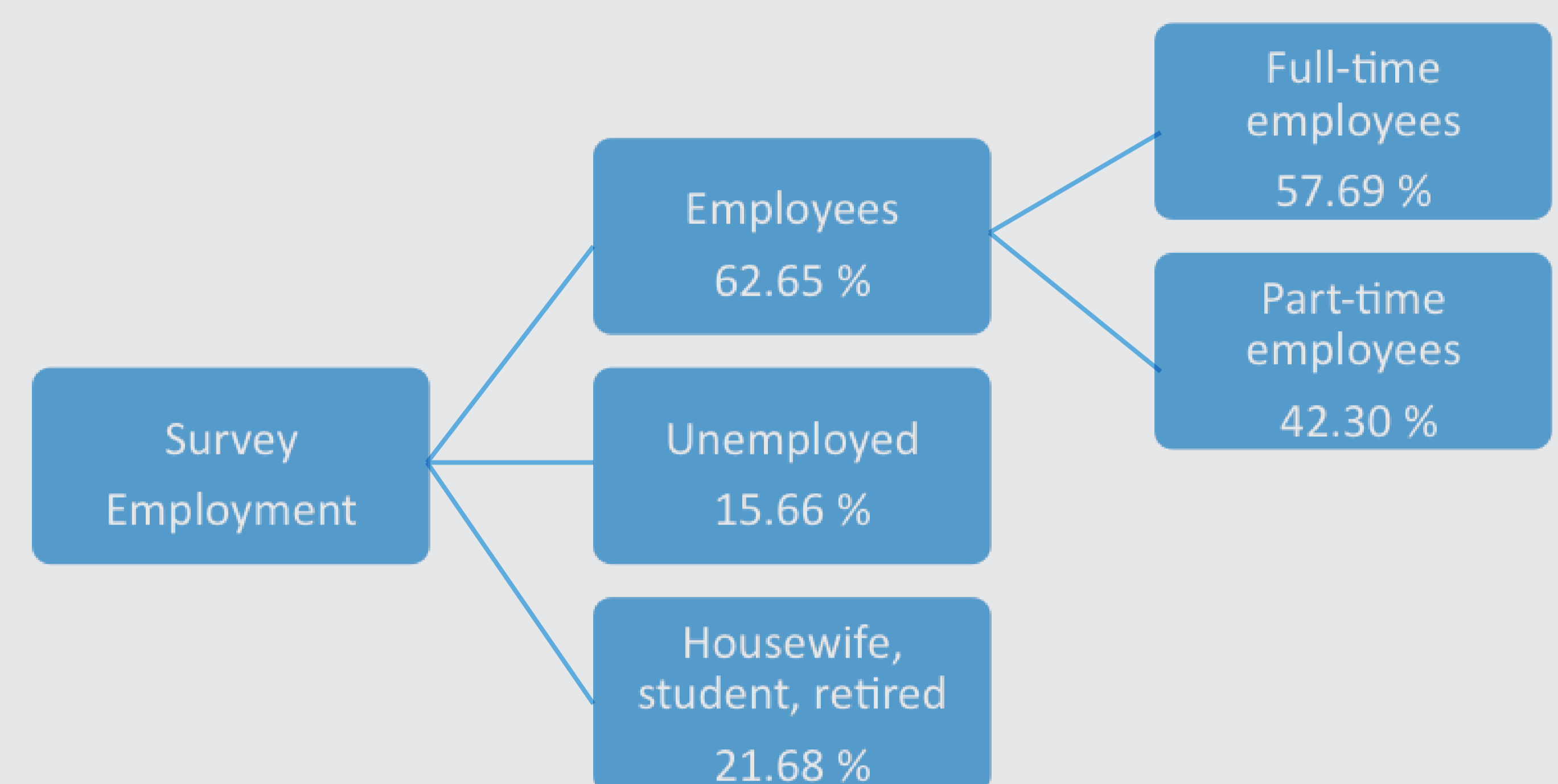
Trained to understand the questions of the employment status questionnaire and respond to the entire procedure

## Statistical analysis

Data analysis was performed using the SPSS statistical version 20.0. The following descriptors were used: frequencies, percentages, media and standard deviations. Inferential calculations were performed using Student t. Alpha for significance was set at .05.

## Results

Graphic 1: Percentages of employees and unemployed of the population with MS in Argentina



Relationship between employment status (no employment, part-time employment, and full-time employment) and clinical and cognitive variables of people with MS

SDMT	Pasat 3"	Pasat 2"	7/24 Visuospatial Scale	BVMTR	Cognitive Factor	Education
$p = .009$	$p = .026$	$p = .008$	$p = .007$	$p = .003$	$p = .033$	$p = .026$

Relationship between employee's full time and part time and clinical and cognitive variables of people with MS

EDSS	Disease evolution	Depression
$p = .002$	$p = .003$	$p = .022$

Relationship between work hours and clinical and cognitive variables (more or less than 30 hours per week)

SDMT	CVLT	EDSS	Disease evolution
$p = .018$	$p = .047$	$p = .023$	$p = .002$

## Conclusion

- Cognitive factors differentiate between employed and non-employed patients.
- Physical disability, disease evolution and depression differentiate between full-time and part-time patients.
- Processing speed and verbal memory, together with the physical disability and disease evolution influence the number of hours worked.

## References

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The authors have nothing to declare.

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